DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 309 465 CS 506 641

AUTHOR McQuillen, Jeffrey S.; Quigley, Tracy A.
TITLE A Comparison of Two Theories of Speech/Language Behavior.
PUB DATE Apr 89
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Speech Communication Association (Louisville, KY, April 6-8, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Language; Comparative Analysis; *Language Acquisition; *Oral Language; *Speech; Speech Acts
IDENTIFIERS Speech Research

ABSTRACT

Two theories of speech appear to parallel each other closely, though one (E. Nuttall) is concerned mainly with speech from a functional perspective, and the other (F. Williams and R. Naremore) presents a developmental hierarchy of language form and function. Nuttall suggests there are two main origins of speech: sounds of discomfort (cries, eventually leading to the speaker's sophisticated means of controlling his/her environment, i.e. persuasion) and sounds of pleasure (coos, the basis for communal exchange, i.e., conversation). Williams and Naremore explain the development of language form and function, characterizing the three general modes of speech as context-centered speech, sender-receiver-centered speech, and topic-centered speech. The two theories appear complementary: the empirical findings of Williams and Naremore's modes of speech continuum may offer the theory of speech behavior some scientific validity, and the theoretical explanations presented in Nuttall's theory of speech behavior may serve as a basis for additional theoretical refinements and possible new research directions for the modes of speech continuum. (One chart is included.) (SR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED309465

A COMPARISON OF TWO THEORIES OF SPEECH/LANGUAGE BEHAVIOR

Jeffrey S. McQuillen
Assistant Professor
Department of Speech Communication
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK 74078
(405) 744-8953

Tracey A. Quigley
Masters Candidate
Department of Speech Communication
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK 74078
(405) 744-6151

Paper submitted for presentation at the Southern Speech Communication Association Annual Convention, Louisville, Kentucky, Arpil 6-9, 1989.

CS506641

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Jeffrey S. McQuillen
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

A COMPARISON OF TWO THEORIES OF SPEECH/LANGUAGE BEHAVIOR

INTRODUCTION

The main focus of this paper is concerned with the concepts of speech and language; the distinctions between these two concepts; and the relational development of each. Traditionally, communication scholars have been interested in the concepts of language and speech. However, until recently, language and speech have been used interchangeably in reference to the same phenomenon. This lack of conceptual accuracy placed a limitation on language scholars, and may have hindered the development of this area of communication research.

The man often attributed with making the distinction between speech and language is de Saussure (1916). de Saussure labelled the significant concepts "la langue" (language) and "la parole" (speech). La langue "is the system of knowledge that a native speaker possesses, which enables him to produce and understand sentences" (Bornstein, 1977, p. 19); and la parole is the individual's oral performance of this language system. Therefore, "an individual can have language without speech, but not speech without language" (Nuttall, in press).

According to M. M. Lewis (1963), "A child is born a speaker and born into a world of speakers" (p. 16). This means that there are innate and environmental factors that direct the child toward speech behavior. Nuttall (in press) suggests there are two main origins of speech: sounds of discomfort (cries) and sounds of pleasure (coos). All other speech behaviors develop out of these two primitive forms of vocal utterances.

SOUNDS OF DISCOMFORT

Sounds of discomfort are the means infants use to release excess energy. As the child matures these cries evolve into verbal assults or invectives directed at the sources of discomfort. If an individual accidentally strikes his hand with a hammer, he may call the hammer a "dumb ass" or some other assaultive term. In this manner, the individual symbolically projects those primitive sounds of discomfort at the causal agent of the pain the individual is now experiencing.

According to Nuttall's speech behavior continuum, the next form of speech to appear in a developing child's repertoire is a command. This speech form is an overt display of an individual's attempt to control his/her environment. Because of the norm of politeness and other social mechanisms, direct commands are not readily accepted in normal equal-status interactions. In order to avoid the counter-productive effects of a direct command an individual may use a complex command. A complex command is a combination of two or more commands (courteous, communal, question, explanatory, and entertaining commands).

The final speech form at this level of the continuum is persuasion. The essential difference between persuasion and commands is more readily evident from the perspective of the listener. An individual who reacts to a command does so because he is obligated to or because he finds no reason to object to complying with the command. The individual wh reacts to persuasion does so because he/she believes the action is the accurate/appropriate and/or acceptable/necessary thing to do.

SOUNDS OF COMFORT

Sounds of comfort have their origin in instinctive cooing. Instinctive cooing is the involuntary expression of pleasure by a child. Exploratory cooing, responsive cooing, and lalling are extensions of instinctive cooing.

Exploratory cooing and lalling are produced for self-consumption. The child coos to explore sensational pleasure (tactile) and lalls to stimulate auditory sensation. This verbal behavior is seen as the beginning of egocentric/inner speech.

Responsive cooing has more of an interactive base than exploratory cooing or lalling. It is a response to external stimulation. A child may coo in reponse to external stimulation. A child may coo in response to the attention given by her/his caretaker. When this type of interaction "provides mutually pleasant stimuli of all types but with emphasis on vocal and auditory ones," the interaction is referred to as "vocal play" (Nuttall, in press).

The next developmental advance along the sounds of comfort continuum is conversation. At this stage interactants attempt to verbally obtain affection, approval and acceptance from their conversational partner(s). The basic elements of conversation are: the location and/or the creation of a communion and an optional confirmation of the communion or the perception of "oneness" the participants may be experiencing.

At the end of the responsive cooing level of the continuum, salutations, a means for social contact, is encountered. Infants' instinctive preverbal response to others is the origin of salutations. This vocal response provides a basis for the previously mentioned concept of vocal play.

In his theory of speech behavior, Nuttall views speech as originating from sounds of discomfort which eventually lead to the speaker's sophisticated means of controlling his/her environment (persuasion), and sounds of comfort which are the basis for communal exchange (conversation).

In theory, this model is concerned mainly with speech from a functional perspective. The categories presented do not discount the presence nor the importance of language; however, minimal attention is given to the concept. This is not a deficiency of the model, but rather a concern for focus.

MODES OF SPEECH CONTINUUM

Williams and Naremore (1969) developed a continuum consisting of a typology depicting the intersection of language form and function in different speech situations. Theoretically, this continuum is representative of modes of speech ranging from very simple speech functions (context-centered) to more complex speech functions (topic-centered). Context-centered speech, sender-receiver centered speech, and topic centered speech are the three general modes of speech characterized by Williams and Naremore (1969).

Context-Centered Speech

Context-centered speech is the first general speech mode. It is characterized by utterances bound by contextual factors. Responses are quite short; for example, "wow," "hey," "yes," or simple naming.

Within the general mode "context-centered" there are two specific modes: contactive and conversative. The contactive mode is characterized by utterances which reflect upon the sender an attempt to initiate, evaluate, or maintain linkage with a receiver. The topic is irrelevant. The following are examples of utterances which initiate, evaluate, etc.: "Hi," "What?", "Dave?". The form of these utterances are single words with no syntactic requirements. The form could be nonvocal also by employing facial expressions or gestures.

The conversative mode is represented by utterances which reinforce and maintain linkages with the receiver. In this mode the receiver of a verbal utterance displays the ability to respond to the utterance sent. An appropriate response indicates the interactant's comprehension of the topic within the discourse. For example, "What is this?" (while holding a familiar object, a shoe), and receiving the answer, "A shoe." Minimal word forms and syntactic fragments are allowable, but the structure can reach to relatively developed sequences.

Sender-Centered Speech

The second general mode of speech is sender-receiver centered speech. The responses are topic related and may be elaborated, only through the reference to concrete and particular experience (William & Naremore, 1969).

The two specific modes categorized within this mode are: descriptive and directive. When employing the descriptive mode, the sender attempts to relate a particular experience or describe an event, place or person (real or imagined) to the receiver. The description reveals experience from a sender's perspective. The form allows for minimal word forms and syntactic fragments for naming or commands, but syntactic elaboration is required to verbally symbolize the structure of the experience. An example of descriptive interaction might be: "What happened at the park?" "I tripped over a log and hurt my head." The target of the question responded in the first person with a brief description of his/her misadventure.

The directive mode is characterized by an attempt on the part of the speaker to prescribe or direct an experience or operation so that the receiver may follow the verbal directions. The sender attempts to take the receiver's perspective. In this manner, the sender demonstrates growing social awareness and the ability to incorporate this information into her/his message generation. An example is: "Can you tell me where the park is?" "If you know where the library is..." In the response, the speaker attempts to adapt the instructions to the anticipated knowledge of the receiver.

Topic-Centered Speech

Topic-centered speech is represented by explicit topical elaboration. The topic is the focus of the speech. The message may be viewed as being highly organized. Topic-centered speech contains three specific modes: interpretive or explanative, narrative, and persuasive. The interpretive or explanative mode is represented by the speaker interpreting or explaining the meaning of some event

experienced, or some idea or concept known. For example: "Why should you brush your teeth?" "Because it keeps them healthy and free from decay."

The narrative mode reflects upon the sender an attempt to verbally organize and develop a story or experience in sequence. The speaker's utterances are adapted to the receiver's perspective. The form of this type of utterance (topic-centered) requires the speaker to use maximal lexical and syntactic alternatives. This style of discourse is not dependent upon the reference to concrete experience, and nonverbal forms are minimally relevant in carrying the "textual meaning"[1] at this level. An example of the narrative mode is: "Can you tell me the story of Jack and the Beanstalk?" "There was this boy named Jack...etc."

The final mode characterized as topic-centered speech is the persuasive mode. The persuasive mode is characterized by an attempt by the sender to induce direction in thinking or behaving on the part of the target by using a verbal strategies. For example, If child A and Child B both desire object X, a persuasive utterance would be: "If you give me X, I'll give you a kiss." or "Why don't we share X; it will be much nicer that way." In the former the agent is offering the promise of affection if he/she is given X; in the latter the agent is appealing to social pressure or norms to induce child B to comply with A's wishes.

In this continuum Williams and Naremore present an explanation of the development of language form and function. They posit three general modes and seven specific functional categories within these modes. They suggest this continuum represents a developmental hierarchy. Research employing the continuum tends to support this contention (Riccillo, 1974; Hopper, 1970).

However, their continuum shows minimal concern, if any, for the basic origin of speech behavior. These scholars concentrate their examination on development once the child has acquired the basics of language useage.

Upon close examination, Nuttall's (1980) theory of speech behavior and Williams and Naremore's (1969) Modes of Speech Continuum can be seen as complementary. They appear to parallel one another closely. These similarities are diagrammed in the chart A listed below.

CHART A

A Comparison of Nuttall's speech forms and Williams and Naremore's functional categories of speech

Theory of Speech Behavior	Modes of Speech Continuum
Salutation	Contactive mode
Communal/Conversation	Conversative mode
Command/Complex Command	Directive mode
Persuasion	Persuasive mode
[2]Auditory explanation	Interpretative/Explanative mode
[2]Auditory entertainment	Narrative mode

This comparison may impart some additional validity to both theories. The empirical findings of the modes of speech continuum may offer the theory of speech behavior some scientific validity, and the theoretical explanations presented in the theory of speech behavior may serve as a basis for additional theoretic refinements and possible new research directions for the modes of speech continuum.

END NOTES

[1] It is known that a large portion of the relational and affective meaning of verbal exchanges is carried by the nonverbal channel. However, due to the nature of the theories being analyzed, no consideration is given to the contribution of nonverbals to the interaction.

[2] The explanation of Nuttall's Theory of Speech Behavior is not complete. The description offered here is concerned with the portion of the theory that focuses on the speaker; however, the conclusion of this paper makes reference to concepts extracted from the listener portion of Nuttall's theory (Auditory explanation, and Auditory entertainment). For further clarification of these terms consult Nuttall (in press).

SELECTED REFERENCES

Hopper, R. W. (1970). Communicative development and children's responses to questions. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin.

Nuttall, E. (in press). Theory of the origins of functions of speech. Wadsworth Publishing Company, Belmont: CA.

Riccillo, S. C. (1974). Children's speech and communicative competence. Unpublished dissertation, University of Denver.

Williams, F. & Naremore, R. (1969). On the functional analysis of social class differences in mode of speech. Speech Monographs, 36, 7-102.